**Retailers as with all other businesses face competition.**

**Retailers are constantly looking at ways to increase their competitiveness and customer service plays a very important part. Customers prefer stores with friendly, helpful staff. Staff that are approachable, willing to assist and attentive to each customer’s specific needs will keep the customer coming back to the store and not have them choose another store instead.**

* **Participate in Sports store activity**

**Which store would you choose? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Give three (3) reasons for your choice.**

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| --- |
| **1** |
| **2** |
| **3** |

**QUALITY SERVICE REPUTATION**

**Only the customer can determine whether the store is offering quality service.**

It is the store management’s responsibility to develop policies and procedures that ensure that the staff interacting with customers delivers what the customer would consider ‘quality service’.

If the staff is aware of these policies and procedures and implement them in a friendly professional manner, then the store will develop and maintain a reputation for quality customer service.

**QUALITIES OF PROFESSIONALISM**

**To describe a person who is striving to be the best in his or her field is the same as describing a person striving to become a**

**‘professional’.**

What words or associations come to mind when you hear “ professional”?

♦ ........................................................................

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**QUALITIES OF PROFESSIONALISM IN RETAILING**

**What are the attributes or qualities of *retail* professionals?**

♦ An understanding and an interest in the products being sold, including the features

and benefits of these products

♦ The ability to provide proper and accurate information on products

♦ Strong communication skills

♦ The ability to resolve complaints

♦ A clear understanding of store policy and the ability to implement this policy

♦ The knowledge of the various roles and responsibilities of store staff

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**Eye appeal is buy appeal**

**This highlights the need for retail staff to pay special attention to:**

Personal presentation – you must look the part: neat, clean, presentable, in the correct uniform

Personality – giving the right non-verbal messages: smiling, greeting signs, open gestures, approaching the customer rather than running away when a customer approaches

Store displays – ensuring they are neat and tidy, full, arranged as required in the correct groupings

Store condition – making sure the store itself is presentable: picking up items that have • been dropped, picking up rubbish, sweeping and mopping areas as required rather than just leaving it till the end of trade and letting the cleaners take care of it.

**Some ‘don’ts’ in terms of providing customer service:**

* Don’t slouch
* Don’t lean against the counter
* Don’t talk to other staff when customers are near, approaching or waiting
* Don’t stay on the phone when customers are waiting
* Don’t skylark at work
* Don’t throw or kick items around
* Don’t chew gum
* Don’t complete paperwork when customers are waiting
* Don’t finish putting stock away when customers are waiting.

**When we do this we increase the chances of:**

**Repeat business – the customer returning to the store and buying more**

**Referral business – the customer telling their friends and family about us meaning they are likely to come in and spend money.**

Tied up with all this is the fact that customers form their impressions about the store, from you. You are the store. If you are well-presented, polite, and helpful, then customers go away with a positive impression.

If you are slovenly, rude and present a ‘couldn’t care less’ attitude, then they will form a similar impression about the store. It is vital that staff realise one very important point in terms of customer service and in terms of building a relationship with customers.



**‘You are on public display – all the time.’**

This means that customers will see you long before they approach you and talk to you. They will see you through the windows of the store, as they walk through the doors, as they walk around the store, as they inspect the goods for sale, and as they approach the service counter.

And any time they see you, they form an impression about you – whether you are approachable, friendly, worth talking to or asking for help, and whether you are likely to deliver true service. All this just from looking at you!

**CUSTOMER RESPECT AND COURTESY**

There is a saying – ***“Treat those as you would like to be treated yourself.”***

This is especially true when interacting with any customer.

All customers are different with individual needs, questions or requests. Yet all customers must be treated with the same level of respect and courtesy no matter how normal or how unusual the customer’s needs may be. Sometimes you may think customer’s requests, questions, or needs are ‘silly’, ‘different’, or ‘difficult’. It is important that you do not embarrass the customer with your response.

* Customers made to feel foolish are much less inclined to buy your product, and discouraged even more from returning to your store.
* Customers with problems or complaints also require to be treated with respect. Discourteous treatment when dealing with a customer that has a problem will only add to their anger.
* Customers who are shown respect and treated courteously will feel appreciated and will return to your store.

Circle which action would be considered an act of respect or showing courteousness.

♦ Greeting a customer with smile and a ‘hi’

♦ Addressing a customer with ‘sir’, ‘madam’, or with their name if it is known

♦ Ignoring a waiting customer

♦ Apologising to customers who are waiting and a brief explanation regarding the reason for the delay

♦ Allowing your eyes to wander and not making eye contact while a customer is speaking to you

♦ Thanking a customer for their business

♦ Expressing willingness to assist a customer in any way

♦ Allowing your body language to show that you wish you were somewhere else

♦ Laughing at what seems to be a ‘stupid’ question

**FULLY UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF THE CUSTOMER**

**For the customer’s needs to be adequately serviced, you must first fully understand what**

**those needs are.**

To do this, you need to ask questions and listen carefully to the answers. It must always

remain a two-way conversation.

It is also important that you confirm the details with the customer by repeating them back to

the customer, and asking the customer to clarify details you do not understand. In this way

you can be assured that you are assisting them in the most appropriate way.

**Basically, these simple steps should be followed:**

**1) Ask the customer how you may assist them**

**2) Listen carefully to what they say**

**3) Ask questions to further clarify their requirements**

**4) Again, listen carefully to their answers**

**5) Clearly repeat the details back to the customer**

**6) Ask questions on details you still do not understand or may have missed**

**7) Listen carefully to their answers**

**8) Again, repeat the details back to the customer**

*The above steps are especially important when a customer is unsure of his or her needs.*

They may not know exactly what they want. In this situation, questions and resulting answers may start off in very general terms. However, as the questioning continues, the needs of the customer become more defined and you are then more able to satisfy those needs.

Sometimes in these situations you may feel frustrated. It is important, however, to always

maintain a friendly facial expression, use a calm, courteous tone of voice and give the

customer your undivided attention. This will keep the customer relaxed and in turn make

them easier to serve.

**QUESTIONING SKILLS**

**The needs of a customer can only be fully understood by skilful questioning and listening.**

**The method of questioning can also affect the mood and comfort of the customer.**

There are basically two types of questions:

**♦ Open-ended questions**

**♦ Closed-ended questions**

An open-ended question allows to the customer to speak freely and describe what they may require.

These questions generally begin with the words ***What****,* ***When****,* ***Where****,* ***Why****,* ***How***and ***Who***

(Eg; Q: ‘What can I direct you towards?’ A: ‘Well, I’m looking for a…’).

A closed ended question usually attracts an abrupt or single word answer such as ‘yes’, ‘no’, or ‘good’ and is likely to make the customer feel uncomfortable. These questions generally begin with the words ***Do****,* ***Are***, and ***Can***

(Eg; Q: ‘Are you looking for anything in particular?’ A: ‘No thanks’).

The time taken to understand a customer’s needs would also increase by asking closed-ended

questions.

**Read each of the following questions and specify whether it is an open-ended question or close-ended question.**

How many pieces were you looking for? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Does our price fit your budget? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What is the price range you are looking at? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Is red the colour you were wanting? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What colours were you interested in? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Do you like this model? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**A customer enters your store and is looking for a new tennis racket.**

Write down three open-ended questions that you would ask the customer to determine what racket(s) you should offer.



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| --- |
| **1** |
| **2** |
| **3** |